



# GHOST TOWN TROUBLES

**UNDEAD HAVE BEGUN TO RISE, FIND THE CULPRIT, AND EXTERMINATE THEM**





## BACKSTORY

Traft ain't no ordinary town. It was built on the outskirts of the Wild Vallies, where plants hardly grow, water hardly flows, and devils dwell in every household. Yet, people chose this place as their own, elected a sheriff, and lived life as best as they could. That's until one day, every single man, woman, and child was murdered. A deputy from the much larger city of Asmoarch was sent to investigate but returned frightened and driven mad, saying the town's filled with ghosts and visions of death. Now it's up to the party to find the truth.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins with the party being recruited by the Asmoarch Sheriff, Tharion Flameheart, who asks them to investigate what happened in Traft. The party arrive within the town to find it indeed filled with visions of death and unruly spirits ready to fight them, all in service of The Haunted Stagecoach, a spiritual vehicle manned by vengeful spirits. It will chase the party into the town's old in, the Rabbit's Foot.

There, the party will meet the town's ghostly drunkards waiting for a fight and, upon defeating them, will get to talk with the bartender and a few others to find out what truly happened. They'll investigate a few other buildings until they piece together that a bunch of bandits, well armed and defended by a cactus golem, came in and killed everyone for their money. The party must now avenge the spirits or suffer the wrath of the The Haunted Stagecoach.

After a brief excursion, the party find the bandits and defeat them, before walking into the sunset.

## PLOT HOOK

The party receives a letter from the Asmoarch Sheriff's Department, asking them to present themselves at the station posthaste. It's left intentionally vague, as to make the party fear they're suspected of some crimes.

If you want to add some extra intrigue and personal connections to the adventure, maybe create backstory links between some party members and Traft, such as a relative who lives there. This will help provide extra incentive.

## CHAPTER 1: GHOST STORIES

In which the party hears about Traft.

### Meeting the Sheriff

To start off, this adventure starts with the players arriving in Asmoarch (if they're not already there). Before proceeding to the description of the town, this is a perfect place for the party to introduce themselves to one another, if you are playing this adventure as a one shot. Once each party has introduced themselves, you may proceed.

Read this:

"You find yourself standing at the edge of a bustling frontier town known as Asmoarch. The buildings here are mostly constructed from rough-hewn timber and weathered brick, with wooden boardwalks lining the streets. The town's main thoroughfare is a chaotic mix of cowboys, prospectors, and merchants, all going about their business amidst the sounds of jangling spurs and clinking coins. As you walk deeper into the town, you notice a few notable landmarks. To your left, a large saloon with swinging doors and boisterous laughter pouring out of it. Ahead, the sheriff's office stands proud and imposing, its exterior decorated with intricate carvings and the emblem of the town. To your right, you spy the general store, stocked with everything from supplies for a long journey to luxury goods for those with money to burn."

The party now finds itself in Asmoarch. They can go to the sheriff's office to start off their quest (*Deputies Needed* subchapter), the Rusty Spur Saloon for a side quest and some rumors (*Saloon Salutes* subchapter) or the Stone's Throw General Store to make some purchases (*Buy or Sell* subchapter). They can choose to go about their business in any order without heavily influencing the story. Once they've decided they're done with Asmoarch and they'd like to proceed to Traft (which they can hear about in either of the three locations), you may proceed to the next chapter.

**GM NOTE:** Considering the saloon and the general goods store have rumors and a side quest about Traft, respectively, there's a possibility the party will ignore their original quest and wish to investigate straight ahead, without getting access to the main quest (given by the sheriff). This is fine. As long as they make it within Asmoarch, the adventure can go on without issue, and their experience will remain mostly the same.





# Deputies Needed

Read this:

"You step directly in front of you, past the saloon and general store and into the imposing sheriff's office. Stepping through the wood and glass door, you hear the clinging of a bell, then are met by a skitterish figure at the front desk."

The party now meets Astin Otterlake (see "Otterlake" sidebar), the sheriff's deputy sent to investigate Traft before the party, now relegated to desk duty.

## Astin Otterlake (CG half-orc guard)

**Information:** Scared to death but otherwise a kind man, Astin Otterlake grew up within Asmoarch, making him accustomed to devils. Ghosts, on the other hand, he is terrified of. As a result, ever since returning from Traft, he's been a shell of his former self, shivering with fear and unable to remain calm. As such, he's been placed on desk duty.

**Roleplaying as Astin:** Portray Astin as outright jittery and terrified when met by the players. Ever since returning from Traft he finds strangers terrifying and won't speak about his experience in the ghost town. He won't be combative but will maintain a distance. He won't recount what he saw in the town until after the party has spoken with Therion.

After introducing themselves to Astin, the deputy will go into the sheriff's office to announce the arrival, then welcome the party in.

Read this:

"As you step into the Sheriff's Office, you are greeted by a silent man and a hint of old-fashioned charm. The room is adorned with wooden walls, giving it a rustic yet sturdy appearance. Sunlight pours through the large windows, casting warm rays across the well-maintained desk and antique furnishings. The air carries the faint scent of ink and aging paper, mingling with the comforting aroma of freshly brewed coffee. A muscular dragonborn lays back in his chair, his eyes smiling at the lot of you. 'Howdy!' he mutters."

The party now meets Sheriff Tharion Flameheart (see "Tharion Flameheart" sidebar). The sheriff will offer them 750 gold each if they find out who killed the citizens and the source of the curse and an additional 750 gold if they track down the killers (if there are any). The party can make a **DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check** to raise the offer to 900 gold per task completed, but no more than that.

Once the party has agreed to the job, Tharion will have them sign a contract, then hand them a torn journal Astin discovered, before sending them to an interrogation room where they may interrogate him if they so desire.

## Tharion Flameheart (LG dragonborn veteran)

**Information:** Tharion is a just and honorable sheriff who upholds the law with a fierce determination. He is known for his unwavering loyalty and fierce dedication to justice, which has earned him the respect and admiration of the townspeople. However, his draconic nature sometimes makes him come off as intimidating and brusque, which can put some people off. He has bright red scales and piercing golden eyes that seem to radiate with intensity. He wears a set of scale mail armor adorned with intricate engravings of his clan's crest, a symbol of his honorable heritage.

**Roleplaying as Tharion:** If you want the party to suspect Tharion as the possible source of the Traft killings, display his brash tendencies and mention how it was Astin's idea to ask for outside help. This will help in creating unease and put into question everything he has to say (which will play into the sidequest the party can find within the saloon).

## The Torn Journal

Found within Traft's Sheriff's Office by Astin Otterlake, this torn journal clearly has some pieces missing, but the few remaining ones might prove useful. It's written from the point of view of an unnamed Sheriff's office clerk. The party can begin its investigation of it with an **Intelligence (Investigation) check**. The information they glean from it will vary based on the result of the roll.

**GM NOTE:** If you'd like, ask the party members investigating the journal to make their roll in private, thus leading to conflicting information.

**1-10** - Near the end of the journal, torn journal pieces provide a vague mention of a curse that befell the town, with no specific details about its origin or nature. The journal pages mention the importance of finding missing pages to uncover the truth. (*this is not true, There's no cult activity going on. The false lead was placed within the journal by the bandits before they left.*)

**10-14** - The party discover that the town's old mayor, Mitch Halshill, was tempted by the promises of a gang, who offered protection in exchange for regular tributes which would cost way less than paying the town's sheriff. This caused a divide between the two. The Sheriff then began sending letters to Tharion Flameheart, which never got an answer.





If questioned about it, Tharion will say he never received any letters. The party may make a **DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check** to find out if he is telling the truth. On a success, they'll sense he is truthful. The letters were, in fact, stopped by Astin at the mayor's behest.

**15-19** - By looking further into it, the party uncovers deeper secrets. They discover pages about a planned stake-out on a mine, but the pages right after are ripped out, almost as if someone wanted to hide the results. The party members can make a **DC 15 Intelligence (History) check** to try and remember things about the mine. On a success, they remember it as both a site for summoning rituals and a very rich silver mine. Perhaps the two things are linked.

**20 or higher** - The party finds a hidden contract in the book's spine, signed between the town leader and a gang known as the Howlthorns. It grants the gang complete control over the city's resources. Upon hearing of the Howlthorn Gang, the party may make a **DC 16 Intelligence (History) check**. On a success, they remember the gang is made of mostly coyote-born, dog-like creatures, not unlike gnolls. They are strong alchemists and poison makers, selling illegal concoctions and cacti golems to rich outlaws.

## Interrogating Astin

After taking Astin to the interrogation room, the party can try to get him to talk in a few ways. Initially, he is too anxious to talk about what happened, but will once the party persuades him with a **Charisma (Persuasion) check**. The information they glean from it will vary based on the result of the roll. If they've bought a **luckstone** or **holy water** from the store before the interrogation, Astin will be comforted and recount additional information.

**GM NOTE:** If you'd like to up the tension, ask the party members leading the interrogation to make their roll in private, thus leading to conflicting information.

**10 or lower** - Fearful they are suspecting him of the crimes, Astin will shift the blame onto a local cult. He'll say he heard rumors or saw symbols that resembled cult practices and hastily concluded that they were responsible. In reality, the cult might be unrelated to the town's fate, leading the party on a wild goose chase hunting for their grounds, only to find nothing.

**GM NOTE:** If you want to send them particularly far away on this chase, consider giving the cult a hideout and have the party go and investigate it, only to find it's just a peaceful alternative religion. Or if the party is particularly bloodthirsty, a violent cult, but the wrong one.

**11-15** - Through conversation and empathetic listening, Astin opens up a bit more. He reveals that the town was once a prosperous and lively place until a mysterious group arrived. The group claimed to offer protection. He suspects foul play, though he doesn't know much about who the group was or what happened shortly after their arrival a few months ago, since the town grew more distant.

**16 or higher** - With a combination of persuasion, intimidation, and providing reassurance, the party gains the Astin's trust. He'll mention hearing rumors about a possible connection between the mayor and the group, as well as growing distrust between the mayor and the owner of the local saloon, the Rabbit's Foot, owned by the Nightshade Brothers, a different gang. Maybe a battle between gangs lead to the summoning of a demon or devil who cursed the city.

**Item Information** - If the party has brought an item to calm Astin (or they charm him in any other way), he'll confess his connection to the Howlthorn Gang by way of the mayor. He'll come clean about hiding the letters and doing so for a ton of money offered to him by the mayor.

Once the party considers they've finished interrogating him, they can either lock him up, set him free, turn him over to Tharion or proceed in any way they deem fitting.

## Saloon Salutes

Read this:

"As you step through the creaking double doors, the atmosphere of the *Rusty Spurr Saloon* envelops you. The air is thick with a mix of tobacco smoke and the pungent scent of whiskey. The flickering light of oil lamps casts dancing shadows upon the weathered wooden floor, revealing the countless boot marks left by rowdy patrons over the years. Rustic wooden tables, scarred from countless games of poker and lively brawls, dot the room. Patrons sit around them, engaged in intense card games, their expressions ranging from focused concentration to heated frustration. The clattering of poker chips fills the air as fortunes rise and fall. In one corner, a lively ragtime piano plays a jaunty tune, its keys expertly pressed by a dwarvish musician in a worn-out cowboy hat."





Within the saloon, the party can either speak with Rosie McNabb, the bartender (see “Rosie McNabb” sidebar), join the gambling tables for money and rumors (see “Gambling” section) or speak with the pianist, “Ivory Fingers” Ironsong (see “Ironsong” sidebar), for additional rumors and information.

### Rosie McNabb (CN gnome commoner)

**Information:** Rosie McNabb is a spirited and vivacious female rock gnome, with fiery red hair that matches her equally fiery personality. Standing at a mere 3 feet tall, she possesses a stout build that belies her strength and determination. Her twinkling green eyes sparkle with a mischievous glint, hinting at the countless tales she could share. Rosie's clothing consists of worn denim pants, suspenders holding them up, and a weathered, button-up shirt adorned with patches and a collection of buttons. She wears a faded bandana around her neck and a wide-brimmed leather hat on her head.

**Roleplaying as Rosie:** Rosie possesses a quick wit and a sharp tongue, always ready with a snappy retort or a clever comeback. Her infectious laughter fills the saloon, putting patrons at ease and creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Despite her boisterous nature, Rosie is fiercely protective of her establishment, ensuring that troublemakers are swiftly dealt with, sometimes with a swift swing of her trusty wooden bat kept behind the bar.

**Sidequest:** Rosie has never been a fan of gangs, but she knew the owner of the Rabbit's Foot saloon due to them being part of the same union. If the party mentions going into Traft, she'll mention the Rabbit's Foot fabled hidden stash of ancient whiskey. If they find it, she'll pay them 3000 gold and put their picture on the wall of her saloon as esteemed guests.

## Gambling

The party may choose to gamble as much money as they'd like, earning back twice the bet amount, but no more than 200 gold (the residents don't have more on them). To gamble, they must make a **DC 16 Charisma (Deception) check** or a **DC 18 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check**. On a success, they win the bet. Additionally, any creature gambling may make a **DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) or Wisdom (Perception) check** to hear a rumor. On a success, they may roll 1d6 and hear a rumor from the following table:

1	<i>An intoxicated prospector, slurring his words and leaning on the bar, claims he stumbled upon the ghost town while wandering through the fields. He whispers that was led outside the town by a ghostly stagecoach.</i>
2	<i>A rugged cowboy, nursing his drink in the corner, tells a tale of a notorious outlaw gang that used the ghost town as their hideout. Rumor has it that they unearthed a hidden treasure and cursed the town to protect their ill-gotten gains. Those who dare to seek the treasure meet a gruesome fate.</i>
3	<i>A weathered old timer, sitting by the fireplace, recounts a story passed down from his ancestors. He reveals that the ghost town was once a flourishing community until a deadly illness struck, wiping out almost the entire population. To fight it, they made a deal with a devil. Now, the devil is coming for his due.</i>
4	<i>A charismatic gambler, with a glint of excitement in his eyes, whispers that the ghost town is a gambler's paradise. Legend has it that an infamous high-stakes poker game took place there, ending in bloodshed and a mysterious disappearance. The spirits of the unlucky players are said to haunt the saloon, forever trapped in their final game.</i>
5	<i>A legendary gunslinger, known for her quick draw, recounts a tale of another notorious gunslinger who met his end in the ghost town. It is said that his spirit now haunts the streets, challenging any foolhardy gunslinger to a deadly duel, turning them into ghosts if they lose. Now, he's turned the entire city. The winner supposedly gains the ghostly gunslinger's unmatched skill with a six-shooter.</i>
6	<i>A rival gang member mentions the Howlthorn Gang and their plans to exploit the town. Perhaps they dug a little too deep into the nearby mines, finding devilish powers.</i>

**GM NOTE:** All these rumors are meant to either scare the party or provide fun hooks for you to develop, if you so desire. At its core, this story is about suspicion and how the true thing turning people into ghosts is not a curse, but simply rage.





## “Ivory Fingers” Ironsong

**Information:** “Ivory Fingers” Ironsong is a gruff but friendly male dwarf with a thick beard that nearly touches the keys of his beloved piano. His stocky build and rugged appearance are typical of his kind, but his nimble fingers and expert musicianship set him apart. He wears a wide-brimmed hat and a leather vest over his checked shirt, with suspenders holding up his pants. His boots are well-worn and his spurs jingle when he walks. His dark eyes twinkle with good humor.

**Roleplaying as Ironsong:** Gimli is a gruff but friendly dwarf, always ready with a hearty laugh and a quick quip. He takes pride in his skill as a pianist and often challenges patrons to duels, playing intricate and impressive pieces to prove his mettle. Despite his rough exterior, Gimli is a romantic at heart, often playing tender ballads that set the mood for couples in the saloon. He even writes his own compositions.

**Rumor:** If the party speaks with Ironsong, he’ll play them a song about a corpse bride bringing the underworld on earth for her wedding, saying that’s what he thinks is happening. The tale is so romantic and hilarious, that the party is inspired, gaining advantage the next saving throw they make against being frightened or possessed in the next 8 hours.

Once the party has spoken to everyone they wish to or wishes to leave, you may proceed.

## Buy or Sell

Read this:

“You enter a bustling wild west general goods store, filled with neatly organized shelves and a variety of essential supplies. The air carries the scent of leather, wood, and spices. There are displays of leather goods, hats, tools, cooking utensils, dry goods, and clothing. The shopkeeper stands behind the counter, ready to assist with a warm smile and bright orange-brown eyes, the color of Jasper himself. The store exudes a cozy atmosphere, with oil lamps casting a gentle glow.”

The party now meets Jasper Stone (see “Jasper Stone” sidebar) and can purchase the following items from his store:

- a **stone of good luck** for 300 gold
- a **cloak of the bat** for 1000 gold
- two pairs of **spurs of swiftness** for 150 gold each
- a **ghost hunter’s lasso** for 1500 gold
- vials of **holy water** for 15 gold a vial
- potions of healing** for 50 gold a vial

## Jasper Stone (TN human commoner)

**Information:** Jasper is a middle-aged human man with a weathered face and deep-set wrinkles around his eyes. He wears a wide-brimmed hat to shield himself from the sun and a long, dusty coat that has seen better days. His boots are scuffed and worn, but his eyes are of an unusual, deeply beautiful color.

**Roleplaying as Jasper:** Jasper is a savvy and ambitious merchant, always on the lookout for the next opportunity to make a profit. He’s not afraid to haggle hard to get the best price for his wares, but he’s also a friendly and gregarious fellow who enjoys chatting with his customers. He’s an expert at sizing up people and situations and can be counted on to give good advice and guidance. As for the ghost town, he’ll say nothing of it, out of fear he’ll become haunted.

Once the party has finished their dealings with Jasper, they can choose to move through the other areas of Asmoarch or proceed to the next chapter.

# CHAPTER 2: THE HEART OF DARKNESS

In which the party ventures into Traft.

## Haunted Streets

**GM NOTE:** Due to the mystery nature of this adventure, overland travel feels largely unfitting. Simply bring the party to the town and let them begin their investigation.

Read this:

“As you enter Traft, the sight before you is hauntingly silent. The once lively streets are now desolate and covered in a thick layer of dust. Wooden facades of buildings stand weathered and worn, their windows shattered and doors ajar. The wind howls through the empty thoroughfare, carrying with it an eerie sense of abandonment. Signs of struggle and odd occurrences can be found if you search closely, such as blood on the walls, firearm pellets on the ground.”





Each party member with a **passive Perception of 14 or higher** may make a **DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check**. On a success, they find a large religious symbol on the wall of a building. Underneath it is the phrase “abandon all hope”. Each party member who spots it must make a **DC 15 Wisdom saving throw** or become frightened for the next hour. A frightened creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of every 10 minutes, ending the effect on a success.

From the streets, the party can investigate either the Sheriff’s Office, the Church or a dilapidated and broken-down house. Once they’ve investigated two of the three locations, they’ll trigger the **Haunted Stagecoach Encounter**. When this happens, proceed to the next subchapter.

## Sheriff’s Office

Read this:

“As you step into the sheriff’s office, the musky scent of old leather and gunpowder fills the air. The room is cluttered with paperwork and scattered documents, showing signs of a hasty departure. A desk stands in the center, its surface covered in dust, except for a locked chest placed upon it. The chest is ornately designed, with engravings hinting at its hidden contents. The walls are adorned with various wanted posters, remnants of a time when law and order prevailed in Traft.”

When the first party member steps through the threshold, they must make a **DC 16 Dexterity saving throw**, as a bead of fire is dropped. They take 6d6 fire damage on a failure or half as much on a success. Inside, the party members can scan the room with a **DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check** or investigate the chest with a **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check**.

If a party member succeeds on the **Perception check**, read this:

“As you examine the room further, you notice a set of jail cells against the far wall. The iron bars stand open as if their former occupants were freed in a rush. The cells’ walls are etched with crude markings, tallying the days and weeks of confinement. The lingering scent of rusted metal fills the air, blending with the faint aroma of stale cigar smoke. Upon closer inspection, you see the locks were broken, not opened. This, together with the locked chest on the desk, leads you to think someone was inside here after the sheriff left with the keys.”

Upon making it inside the cells, the party members can make a **DC 18 Wisdom (Survival) check** to find the tracks and objects left behind by the prisoners before they left. On a success, they find markings on the walls in Infernal and a small gang badge. If a party member knows Infernal, they find out the writings say “Howling At Hell Forever”.

**GM NOTE:** This is the motto of the Howlthorn Gang.

If a party member succeeds on the **Investigation check**, read this:

“You notice a series of scratches and scuffs marring the surface around the lock. It becomes apparent that someone had attempted to force the lock, but their efforts proved futile. Deep grooves mar the edges of the keyhole, evidence of a failed attempt to gain access. The sheer force applied in desperation is evident, but the sturdy construction of the chest withstood the assault. The failed attempt to open the chest speaks of the desperation of those who sought its contents. The unanswered question lingers in the air: What valuable information or precious item lies within?”

The chest is locked and trapped. The trap can be disabled with a **DC 18 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check** and the lock can be opened with a **DC 20 Thieves’ Tools check**. If opened without first disabling the trap, the creature opening it must succeed on a **DC 16 Constitution saving throw** or take 8d8 necrotic damage and be stunned until the end of their next turn. Inside the chest, there are all the ripped out pages from the journal, alongside a more detailed file on the Howlthorn Gang and a **silver sheriff’s badge**.

Once the party feels they’ve investigated the entirety of the Sheriff’s Office, they may leave and return to the streets.

## Church

**GM NOTE:** The church is mostly used as a way to “waste” the party’s precious time before encountering the **Haunted Stagecoach**. Due to the many false leads of occultism, the party might go to the church expecting something more than they’ll actually get, which is exactly the point. The more confused they feel, the better.





Read this:

"You approach the weathered wooden doors of the church, the paint peeling and chipped. Inside, the pews are empty and covered in a layer of dust, as if no one has sat here for a while. At the altar, a flickering candle casts long shadows on the faded religious symbols adorning the walls. A feeling of heaviness hangs in the air, hinting at something ominous that transpired within these sacred walls. Near the entrance, you notice a mysterious symbol etched into the ground, its meaning shrouded in mystery."

Bring the party to map 1. They arrive at area 1 and may explore it as they wish. At area 1, they may also investigate the symbol etched on the ground with a **DC 16 Intelligence (Religion) check**. On a success, they identify there are no religious ties to the symbol, regardless of it being within the church. It seems to be placed at a later point by someone with no particular link to religion. On a failure, they identify it as the symbol of an evil god, though they can't exactly tell which one.

Once the party feels they've investigated the entirety of the Church, they may leave and return to the streets.

## 1 - Point of Arrival

The party arrives here.

## 2 - Trail of Blood

When the party touches the trail of blood, read this:

"As you touch the blood, the air suddenly becomes heavy, as if the very atmosphere within the church is charged with an otherworldly energy. The flickering candlelight at the altar dances and flares, casting eerie shadows that seem to twist and contort. A haunting silence descends upon the church, broken only by a faint, whispered voice. The sound grows louder, echoing through the empty pews, filled with an unmistakable rage and sorrow. Suddenly, a figure materializes before you, ethereal and translucent. It is the ghost of a priest, his spectral form shimmering with an otherworldly glow. Then, two other shades form, that of the monks who served under him."

The party is attacked by the **wraith** of a priest and **two ghosts** of his monks. During the fight, the priest will continuously yell about how "our protectors doomed us!" to hint at the truth of what happened to the city.

## 3 - Altar

Any party member at the altar can make a **DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check** to discover the same writings in Infernal as in the Sheriff's office, which spell out "Howling At Hell Forever".

## Dilapidated House

Read this:

"As you venture further into the town, you come across a large dilapidated house, its walls nearly crumbling, despite its otherwise fancy structures. Its wooden beams sag, and its windows are shattered, much more broken down than any other house around it. The front door creaks on its rusty hinges, as if beckoning you to enter. What's more, you can hear cries of anguish from inside. Immediately upon walking inside, darkness seems to linger, broken only by faint beams of light that filter through the cracks in the ceiling. The air feels stagnant, carrying a stale scent of decay and forgotten memories. The floorboards creak under your weight as if whispering the secrets of the past. Upon stepping through the corridor, you find yourself in a large living room, in the middle of which is a pile of bones and decrepit flesh, a destroyed husk of what once was a man. Next to it, mourning it loudly, the ghost of a man, lowly whispering 'I've ruined everything.'"

The party now meets the ghost of Mitch Halshill (see the "Mitch Halshill" sidebar), who is mourning his mistakes.

### Mitch Halshill (CN ghost of a human noble)

**Information:** The ghostly mayor hovers in the air, his translucent form seeming to sag under the weight of his sorrow. His ghostly attire reflects his former status, adorned with the remnants of fine garments now faded and tattered. A heavy gold chain hangs around his spectral neck, symbolizing the materialistic desires that consumed him in life.

**Roleplaying as Mitch:** Mitch Halshill's countenance is etched with lines of anguish and deep sadness. His eyes, once filled with ambition and greed, now reflect profound regret and an unquenchable longing for redemption. A sense of weariness and resignation permeates the room as he drifts closer, his ghostly presence suffused with a melancholic aura. He hates himself for what he did and the way he died, tortured by the very men he had brought upon the city by mistake.





The party can speak with Mitch about the things he's done, but he won't tell them the truth until they make a **DC 17 Charisma (Deception), Charisma (Intimidation), or Charisma (Persuasion) check**. After convincing him with either check, he'll come clean about the fact he made a deal with the Howlthorns, but he doesn't know what made them go violent and murder the town. He just knows something bad happened.

Once the party feels they've spoken with Mitch enough, they may leave and return to the streets.

## The Stagecoach Chase

Read this:

"As you set foot once again upon the deserted streets of Traft, a pall of dread settles upon the air. A heavy fog rolls, and whispers echo through the stillness, chilling your bones and setting your nerves on edge. Suddenly, a distant sound cuts through the silence—a mournful creaking, like the desperate groans of a tortured soul. The noise grows louder, closer, and the ground beneath your feet trembles with an unseen force. It is then that you catch a glimpse, a flickering apparition in the corner of your eye—the ethereal form of a ghostly stagecoach hurtling toward you with an unholy speed. The stagecoach emerges from the fog, its wooden frame warped and rotting, as if it had been dredged from the depths of a long-forgotten nightmare. The wheels, caked with grime and rust, turn with a haunting screech, grinding against the tortured echoes of the past. Tattered remnants of curtains flap wildly through broken windows, whispering their lamentation. Ghostly steeds, emaciated and spectral, strain against their ethereal harnesses, their eyes glowing with an otherworldly fire. It's time to run."

The party must now roll for initiative, as they must run away from the **Haunted Stagecoach**, which will chase them further inside Traft and toward the Rabbit's Foot Saloon.

**GM NOTE:** Though a little bit "railroaded", as the Stagecoach wants to lead the party into a certain location, but the difficulties they encounter can be as varied as you'd like. The following table is just a few of the possible problems, but feel free to design new ones if you'd like. It's also likely that the party will try and fight the Stagecoach. In this case, have the Stagecoach damage the party at first, but pull its punches, since it only wants to scare them, not kill them. After a few strong hits, they should realize it is time to leave.

At initiative 20, a party member must roll 1d8, dictating the threats the party will encounter for that turn from the table below. It is assumed that the party members are taking their full movement to run away from the **Haunted Stagecoach**, barely dodging it due to their existing lead and sharp turns, unless specified otherwise. Since this encounter proposes a lot of movement, use theatre of the mind and vivid descriptions to make it come to life. Once the party has passed through as many difficulties as there are party members (minimum of 3), you may proceed to the end of the encounter.

**GM NOTE:** The most important thing for a chase encounter is mood, not mechanics. Narrate the difficulties they encounter quickly and don't let them spend time to think. If they do, penalize them with damage or other drawbacks. Go from turn to turn as quickly as possible and make them feel like they need to stay ahead of the stagecoach at all costs.

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MAP 1





1	<b>Ghostly Mirage.</b> The haunting energy of Traft creates illusions that lead the party astray. They encounter <b>three ghosts</b> , beckoning them into false sanctuaries or traps. Each party must make a <b>DC 17 Wisdom (Insight) check</b> or be led into a trap. The trap is made of old bombs inside a deep hole. Each party member guided into the trap must make a <b>DC 17 Dexterity saving throw</b> , taking 4d8 fire damage on a failure and half as much on a success.
2	<b>Ghostly Pursuers.</b> The ghostly passengers of the stagecoach reach out from the windows, their ethereal forms clawing at the party. These spirits are relentless and can drain the life force of anyone they touch. Each party member must make a <b>DC 17 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check</b> to break free of their grasp or take 3d10 necrotic damage and be pulled back by the <b>Haunted Stagecoach</b> , granting them disadvantage on the next portion of their escape.
3	<b>The Cemetery.</b> As the party races through the town, they stumble upon the cemetery, its entrance partially concealed by overgrown vegetation. Within it lie two <b>minotaur skeletons</b> ready to devour them.
4	<b>Collapsing Structures.</b> The decaying buildings of the ghost town are unstable, and the vibrations caused by the stagecoach's thunderous pursuit threaten to bring them crashing down. The party must stay ahead of the collapsing structures, leaping over debris and avoiding falling rubble. Each party member must make a <b>DC 17 Dexterity or Strength saving throw</b> or take 6d8 bludgeoning damage.
5	<b>Narrow Streets.</b> The streets of Traft are filled with narrow alleyways, making it difficult to navigate, but easy to outrun a stagecoach hitting against the walls. The first party member in initiative order must make a <b>DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check</b> . On a success, the party encounters no issue. On a failure, the party stumbles into a dead end. Each party member must get over the wall by teleporting, flying or making a <b>DC 18 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check</b> or fall behind and be rammed by the <b>Haunted Stagecoach</b> .
6	<b>Swift Dodge.</b> The many buildings and streets of Traft prove to be the perfect grounds for a hiding spot. Each party member must make a <b>DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check</b> . On a success, they break line of sight from the <b>Haunted Stagecoach</b> . If all party members successfully hide, the chase ends.
7	<b>Lucky Distraction.</b> Nearby beasts hear the commotion and stumble into the town, drawing the stagecoach's attention.
8	<b>Sharp Turn.</b> Enough sharp turns are sure to knock a stagecoach over. The party takes a sharp turn, gaining a full round of movement on the <b>Haunted Stagecoach</b> and experiencing no difficulties.

Once you've reached the end of the encounter, read this:

"As you race through the streets, the relentless pursuit of the haunted stagecoach nipping at your heels, you take a sharp turn and catch sight of an eerie sight amidst the desolation—a dilapidated saloon with a faded sign that reads "The Rabbit's Foot." The building looms before you, its weathered facade offering a glimmer of respite. The stagecoach has lost your sight. If you hide inside, it might just pass you by. Then, almost to confirm your suspicions, the door opens and you hear a voice beckoning you from inside. 'Now, quickly!' With your heart pounding, you turn to your allies. Do you follow it?"

**GM NOTE:** If the party does not walk inside the tavern, simply run them through the remaining chase encounters, then describe how, despite not walking in that direction, they end up in front of the saloon once more, almost as if the streets are shifting around them to guide them in this direction. That should give enough of an incentive to go in.

Once the party walk into the saloon, you may proceed to the next subchapter.

## The Saloon

Read this:

"Cautiously, you open the creaking doors, your eyes adjusting to the dimness within. The air hangs heavy with the scent of stale whiskey and decay, a chilling reminder of the life this place once knew. Shadows dance along the walls, cast by the flickering candlelight that barely illuminates the interior. Within the saloon's dimly lit interior, time seems suspended. Dust dances through the ethereal glow of flickering candles, casting eerie shadows that dance across peeling wallpaper. But as you disturb the stagnant air, an unsettling revelation unfolds before your eyes. The saloon is not empty, for the ethereal forms of Traft's lost citizens materialize around you. Ghostly apparitions manifest, their faces etched with anguish and longing. Some sway in a spectral waltz, their translucent bodies caught in a tragic dance frozen in time, others gamble at their tables, saddened and angry. Among the spirits, the ghostly figure of the barkeep materializes behind the rotting counter. His features are weathered, his eyes hollow and haunted. A jagged scar mars his visage, a reminder of a violent past that continues to torment his spectral form. His voice carries a mournful resonance, barely audible above the spectral symphony that permeates the saloon. 'Ah, our guests have arrived,' and the entire inn shakes with laughter. 'You've come to take what's left, Howlthorns? Get them, boys!' With that, you notice the doors behind you become barred by a spectral barrier as the ghosts rise from their tables, ready to fight you."





Bring the party to map 2. They find themselves near the door, while the inn is inhabited by angry undead who suspect them of being members of the Howlthorn Gang. The party can go about the encounter in either a peaceful or combative way. If they wish to convince the spirits they are not members of the Howlthorn Gang, they must make a **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check**, with the DC being lowered by 2 for each clue or item they bring up (such as the journal, Astin's allegiance to the gang, the mayor's body, the contract within the journal, the gang badge, etc.). Alternatively, the party can go straight into battle. They must fight **5 specters**, **2 undead sheriffs**, and **1 wraith**. Once brought below 1 quarter of their hit points, the undead will retreat, moving back and ignoring the party, now open to talking to them.

**GM NOTE:** It is important for the story that, even if the party would kill the undead, to describe how they simply retreat heavily wounded. This is especially true for the sheriffs and wraith, who will be the main NPCs the party interacts with and find out integral information from.

Once the party has defeated all enemies or convinced them to speak and not fight, you may proceed to the next subchapter.

## Ghost Stories

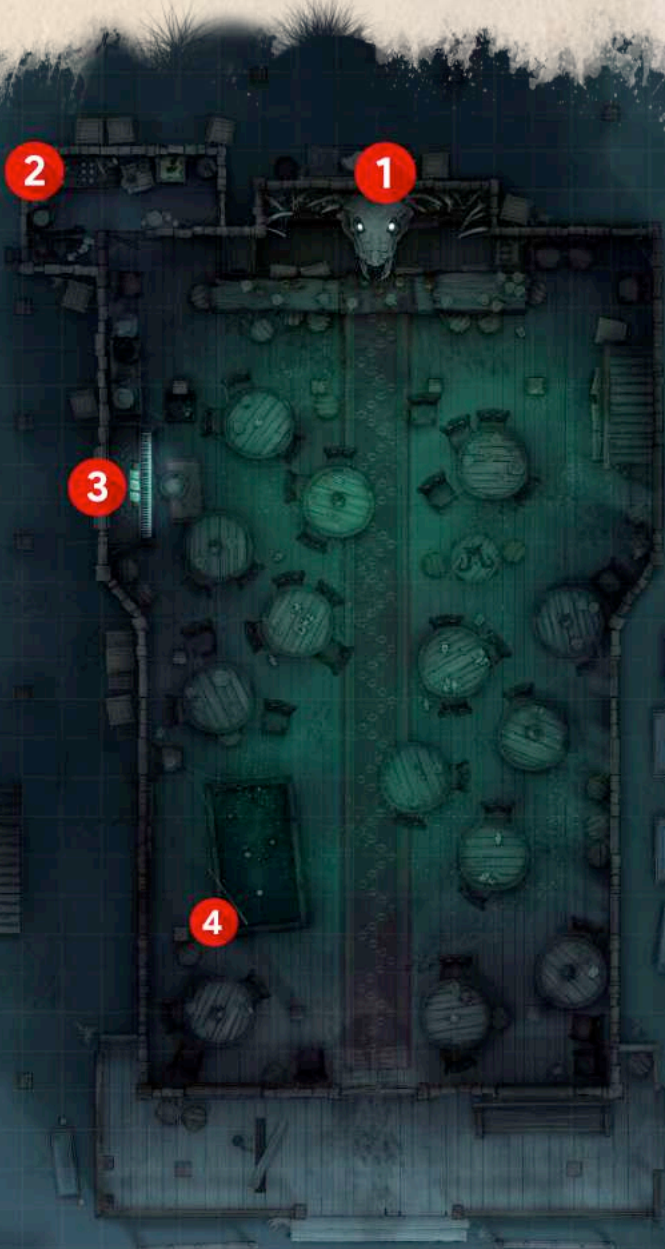
Now that the ghosts have agreed to speak to the party, they can now tell them the full story of what really happened in Traft. The party meets the barkeep of the Saloon, Silas "Scarface" Black (see "Silas Black" sidebar), as well as the deceased Sheriff, Fabian Lawson (see "Fabian Lawson" sidebar).

### Silas Black (TN wraith of a human)

**Information:** Silas Black, known as "Scarface" among the people of Traft, is a spectral figure who haunts the abandoned saloon, The Rabbit's Foot. He bears a prominent scar that cuts across his weathered face, a testament to the violent past that marked his life. Silas wears the tattered remnants of what was once a dapper bartender's attire, now faded and worn, blending with the ethereal essence of his ghostly form. Silas Blackwood was once a respected and feared member of a notorious gang known as The Nightshade Brothers. He served as the bartender of The Rabbit's Foot, which was a front for the gang's illicit activities. Silas had a reputation for his cunning and quick thinking, his loyalty unwavering in the face of danger.

**Roleplaying as Silas:** Silas's spectral presence holds a mixture of remorse and longing. He desires to atone for the sins committed in life, seeking closure and the opportunity to sever the ties that bind him to the ghostly plane. To aid the party in their quest, he shares his knowledge of the town, the gang's hidden secrets and how they started the fight that killed everyone.

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## Fabian Lawson (NG undead sheriff)

**Information:** Fabian Lawson was a tall and imposing figure during his days as the sheriff of Traft. In death, his zombified form maintains his strong and commanding presence. He wears a worn and weathered sheriff's hat, adorned with a tattered band that bears the emblem of Traft. His attire consists of a long duster coat, buttons glinting with the remnants of authority, and a sheriff's badge that still shines with an ethereal light. His face is stern, etched with the determination and wisdom of a lawman who faced countless challenges.

**Roleplaying as Fabian:** During his tenure, Traft was plagued by a wave of banditry and lawlessness due to mayor Mitch's indifference. Lawson led the charge against these criminals, tirelessly pursuing and apprehending them with unwavering determination, even working together with The Nightshade Brotherhood to do so. He stood firm against corruption and fought to protect the innocent, earning him the loyalty and admiration of the townsfolk. However, Lawson's life came to a tragic end during a violent confrontation with the Howlthorn Gang. In a desperate showdown, he valiantly fought to defend the town but fell victim to an ambush. Though mortally wounded, his spirit refused to rest, and he remained bound to Traft as a guardian and protector, forever haunted by the failures of that fateful encounter.

The two will remorsefully tell the party of their plan, which doomed the entire city. They were going to kill Mitch and place Silas as mayor, giving the Nightshade Brotherhood more control over the city. They, in turn, would promise to not exploit or harm the citizens, slowly make their business legitimate, and drive out the Howlthorn Gang.

Upon hearing of their plan, the Howlthorn Gang attacked the saloon and killed everyone inside, which prompted the town to strike back at them, led by Fabian, who only thought of the fame he'd gain by stopping such farmers and even Mitch, then stole everything and ran away, guarded by their cactus golem.

For some reason, the massacre conjured enough rage within the spirits to bring them all back to life as ghosts. Until the Howlthorn Gang is dead, they'll never be able to rest. As for the Haunted Stagecoach, it's filled with other spirits, all of which are aligned with Fabian, whose plan was always to scare the party away or kill them, thinking they are members of the gang who have come in for a second sweep.

Once the party has heard their stories, they can also investigate the inn for clues as to where the gang went or other such things. After they think they've done all the investigation they can, the party can either return home or go searching for the bandits and you may proceed to the next chapter.

## 1 - The Haunted Skull

The party can analyze the skull with a **DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check**. On a success, they'll discover a gem inside each eye, which are magical and are connected to something inside the skull, a focus of sorts.

If they ask Silas about it, he'll say he knows nothing about it.

The party can retrieve the focus with a **DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check**. Once retrieved, a *detect magic* spell or a **DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check** will reveal the gems are divination devices working akin to the *arcane eye* spell. This is the way in which Mitch and the Howlthorn Gang were spying on Silas and discovered his plan.

Using this focus, the party can return to Mitch (or be led to him by Silas and the Haunted Stagecoach), who'll take them to his office. There, they'll find the reception device. This device will clue the party into what transpired the day of the showdown. After killing everyone in the saloon, the members of the gang said to each other "Back to the mine we go!". The party has thus found the gang's location.

## 2 - Backroom

Read this:

"To the immediate left side of the bar, you see a door to the backroom, which Silas points you towards nonchalantly. 'I can't use anything inside there anymore anyway.' Upon entering, a rush of damp, stale air greets your senses, carrying with it a faint scent of decay and a chill that seems to seep into your very bones. Dimly illuminated by a flickering lantern hanging from a rusted hook on the wall, the backroom only carries a few dancing shadows that writhe along the walls. You can also see plenty of drinks and snacks you might want."

Each party member may make a **DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check**. On a success, they find a few drinks worth 100 gold, which they can sell or drink. There is, however, no sign of the secret whiskey stash.





### 3 - Piano

Read this:

"On the side of the saloon, amidst the shadows and the lingering echoes of lost melodies, stands a haunting sight—a dilapidated grand piano, its once elegant form now worn and weathered. The instrument, once the centerpiece of joyous gatherings and lively entertainment, now sits as a forlorn relic of a bygone era. Despite that, it is still playing, even though no one stands at the keys. When you approach, Silas laughs. 'The pianist's ghost must've gone into the piano, since we can't see his body anymore. He just haunts it.'"

If a party member attempts to touch or play the piano, they must succeed on a **DC 17 Wisdom saving throw** or become frightened of the piano for 1 minute. A frightened creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. When a creature plays the piano, it can make a **DC 17 Charisma (Performance) check**. On a success, the creature satisfies the ghost of the pianist, which opens the top of the piano to reveal the hidden batch of whiskey.

Alternatively, the party can find the hidden whiskey by making a **DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check** when looking around the piano.

They can use this stash to complete Rosie's sidequest and get the gold from her.

### 4 - Pool Table

Read this:

"Gazing upon the pool table, something strikes you as quite odd. A few of the balls are in clumps, but many of them create direct pathways, like they've been placed this way intentionally."

Any party member may make a **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check** to look at the pool table in more detail. On a success, they discover the balls form the shape of the town, with the 8-ball a little ways away, signifying a separate location (the mine). If asked about it, the ghosts will say no one's touched the pool table since the showdown. Perhaps the bandits made a map of their hideout and the city to have a better idea of how to ambush Fabian once they left the saloon. By using this unconventional map, the party also finds the Howlthorn Gang's location.

## CHAPTER 3: UNDEAD PAYBACK

In which the party find the culprits.

### Finding the Bandits

If the party have gone out in search of the bandits, proceed normally. If they decided to return home to Tharion without finding them, proceed to the last subchapter.

Before the party goes out in search of the bandits, they may take a long rest. Then, they begin the last leg of their adventure. They may also make a **DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check** to ask the ghosts about how the Howlthorn Gang fights. On a success, they'll tell them about the draining abilities of the **cactus golem** and how their leader is a massive dog like creature with a gun.

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MAP 3





Through rumors and investigations, the party might've found hints about the location of the bandits. If they have and they've concluded the bandits are located in the mine, their path is easy, they encounter no troubles and you can proceed to the next subchapter. If the party haven't found the hideout yet, a designated party member must make a **DC 18 Wisdom (Survival) check** to track them down. On a failure, each party member gains 1 point of exhaustion, then you may proceed to the next chapter.

## The Mine Hideout

Read this:

"Hidden deep within the rugged terrain near Traft, the mine hideout of the notorious Howlthorn Gang lies nestled amidst rocky outcrops and barren landscapes. The entrance to this secretive lair is concealed behind a weathered wooden gate, barely standing against the test of time and the elements. As the party approaches, the creaking hinges groan in protest, hinting at the mysteries that lie beyond. In front of it stands a formidable guardian, an imposing figure that seems to have emerged from the very desert itself—the Cactus Golem. Standing at an impressive height of ten feet, the golem is a towering behemoth of prickly and gnarled cactus limbs, bound together by enchanted vines that pulse with an otherworldly green glow. Its body, fashioned from countless thorns and spines, gleams in the dim light, a testament to the arduous and meticulous craftsmanship that birthed this creature. The Cactus Golem's presence is a chilling sight to behold. Its form is reminiscent of a massive humanoid, its shape carved with uncanny precision to resemble muscular arms and a broad chest. Its head, adorned with an intricately carved face, bears glowing red eyes that pierce through the darkness, seemingly fueled by the essence of the desert itself."

Bring the party to map 3. They can approach from any angle. At area 1 is the **cactus golem** and two **coyote tricksters** stand guard at each point marked with 2. If the party approach head on without attacking at first, the cocky guards will tell them to run away before they get killed. The guards are not interested in bribes or talking and will attack the party the moment they get too close and disobey their orders.

Once the party kills the **cactus golem**, one of the two **coyote tricksters** will begin running to get help. If he reaches area 3, roll initiative for the **wendigunslinger** and **2 coyote tricksters**, who will arrive on the next round of combat. If he is killed before reaching the area, no enemies will arrive for 1d4 rounds, before the **wendigunslinger** finally arrives without aid. The **wendigunslinger**, named Marshall Howlthorn, will arrive alongside only **1 coyote trickster**. He is the leader of the gang and came out when he heard the commotion to "deal with the issue himself". After a brief monologue, he'll begin attacking the party.

**GM NOTE:** If the party seems to be in too good of a shape, don't be afraid to throw more enemies at them for extra difficulty.

Once the party has killed or captured the **wendigunslinger**, the rest of the enemies will back down and scatter. With their leader dead, they don't wish to fight the party and risk their lives. The party can now return home. You may proceed to the next subchapter.

## The End

Once the party returns home, give them the appropriate amount of gold for the quests they got done, then proceed to one of the following endings, based on how the party went about their quest:

-**The Bad Ending.** If the party returned home without attacking/finding the Howlthorn Gang, Traft will remain a ghost town forever and the Howlthorns will manage to escape the hand of the law.

-**The Good Ending.** If Marshall Howlthorn was killed, Traft will remain a ghost town, but filled with kindly trickster rather than vengeful ghosts. No one will die there, but no one will rebuild either.

-**The Best Ending.** If Marshall Howlthorn was captured and brought to justice, so is the entire gang. The ghosts of Traft are laid to rest, Astin is sent to prison and the city is rebuilt better than ever.

The End.





# THANK YOU!

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OF THOSE WHO FOLLOW AND SUPPORT ME, WITHOUT YOU I COULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT THIS PROJECT TO LIFE.

COVER ART BY **GRAND FAILURE**, USED WITH PERMISSION.

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TAKE CARE!

